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Committee on Conferences
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Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Ms. Radhia **Achouri** (Tunisia)

V. Information technology

Introduction and overview

1. At its 444th, 445th and 446th meetings, the Committee on Conferences considered the report of the Secretary-General on pattern of conferences (A/57/228), paragraphs 118 to 139, on information technology, and the report of the Secretary-General on improving the performance of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services (A/57/289), paragraphs 41 to 48, on optimizing the use of technology.

2. The Committee learned that the major changes that had come about since the previous year's report on information technology involved, first and foremost, a new policy approach that put information technology in the forefront. A policy decision had been made to move towards complete electronic processing of information. In that context, an important new project was the introduction of the digital recording system to replace dictaphones. Since the Information Management and Technology Unit had become essential to the progress of the Department, it was to be transferred from the Executive Office to the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management and its functions would be broadened to cover a full range of information and communications technology services.

Discussion

3. The Committee emphasized that it was essential for the Organization to keep abreast of cutting-edge technology. Information technology in particular would have an impact on global management.

4. In response to concerns expressed, the Secretariat reassured the Committee that all the projects of the Department were part of the overall information technology plan of the Organization, thus avoiding fragmentation of the process. Some technology projects would be implemented within the context of the capital

master plan, although it might be found advisable to move the schedule for some projects forward.

5. Regarding the timing of some changes, it was explained that the new format of the *Journal* with electronic links appeared on the first day of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly and the technology would eventually be extended to other duty stations.

6. In response to questions about the projected costs, it was explained that, on the basis of very rough estimates, the Department expected the proposals and projects described in the two reports to be cost-neutral overall, with some shifting of personnel and resources.

7. Questions were raised about the relative merits of the Documents Control and Productivity Monitoring System (DCPMS) used at the United Nations Office at Vienna and the e-DRITS system used in New York.

8. A number of delegations expressed satisfaction about the manifest improvement in the technical quality of videoconferencing and enthusiasm for its potential cost-saving applications. It was mentioned that the Secretary-General was to prepare a report on videoconferencing applicable to the Organization as a whole.

9. Interest was expressed in a cost analysis of a global database for interpreters, text processors and translators.

Conclusions and recommendations

10. **The Committee welcomed the updated information contained in the report on a number of information technology projects and requested the Secretariat to implement them as soon as possible and to report the following year on the progress that had been made. As the report of the Secretary-General on improving the performance of the Department made clear, information technology projects were crucial to achieving the goal of servicing Member States more efficiently. The Committee underlined the need to give priority to projects that had the potential for improving department-wide productivity without sacrificing quality.**

11. **The Committee emphasized that it was important for the Department's projects to dovetail with the overall technology plan of the Organization and to fit within the context of the capital master plan.**

12. **The Committee stressed that information technology was essential in achieving integrated global management of conference services.**

13. **The Committee requested the Secretariat to study the relative merits of the document tracking systems currently in use in the different duty stations and the possibility of combining the best features of each.**

14. **The Committee also requested the Secretariat to make more extensive use of videoconferencing in meetings, in view of the manifest improvements in the technology, in order to increase the contact between intergovernmental bodies and Secretariat officials posted away from Headquarters, while achieving cost savings.**